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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MOSCOW 002439

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MARR](#) [GG](#) [RS](#)  
SUBJECT: TFGG01: RUSSIA FOCUSES ON SEALING DEAL

REF: MOSCOW 2415

Classified By: Political Minister-Counselor Alice G. Wells. Reasons 1.  
4(b) and (d).

11. (C) Summary. As German Chancellor Merkel arrives in Sochi, the GOR is focusing on sealing the deal reached during French President Sarkozy's trip, and signed by the Abkhaz and South Ossetia leaders in Moscow on August 14. Despite press speculation whether Russia would recognize Abkhazia and South Ossetia's independence following Medvedev's statement that Russia would support and guarantee any decisions made by the people of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and Lavrov's questioning of Georgia's territorial integrity, the GOR chose to focus on finalizing the Six-Point Plan, noting that Moscow would not focus "yet" on the issue of Georgia's territorial integrity. Medvedev told servicemen August 14 that Russia's current goal was "a definitive ceasefire," withdrawal of Georgian troops "to their permanent positions," and a legally-binding agreement. He intimated that Russia would keep its peacekeepers in the region to "deter the Georgian side," and deal with the humanitarian crisis. The MFA blasted the U.S.-Poland missile defense deal, saying the timing proved the system was aimed at Russia, not Iran, and military officials threatened that Poland would now be targeted by Russia. The Russian MOD continued to deny that Russian troops had used heavy weapons against Gori, or had used cluster munitions. It declared that Russian troops were returning to barracks, and questioned what the cargo was that the U.S. was transporting to Georgia, despite demarches to the MFA and MOD underscoring the nature of the humanitarian assistance. End summary.

Russia Holding Off-For Now-on Recognition  
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12. (U) While the press questions whether the GOR was heading towards recognizing Abkhazia and South Ossetia's independence following Medvedev's and Lavrov's statements August 14, the Deputy Director of the MFA Department of Information and Press said "Moscow won't focus on the thesis of the territorial integrity of Georgia. Not yet. It is more important to fulfill the plan of a political settlement, and only after that to proceed to the discussion on the status." Following the meeting with Medvedev August 14, Abkhaz leader Bagapsh said he and South Ossetian leader Kokoity had not discussed the two regions' independence in the meeting, but the two leaders said they were sending their "Foreign Ministers" to Moscow August 15 to "coordinate with the GOR and discuss next steps in gaining recognition."

13. (C) Aleksandr Khramchikhin, Director of the Institute of Strategic Assessments, told us August 15 that he believed Russia's recognition was much more likely now to happen in the near future, as the GOR could not return to the status

quo ante. He lamented that recognition would not be in Moscow's best interests, as it could lead to Russia's isolation from the international community.

¶4. (U) An Interfax poll taken August 10-13 showed that 80 percent of Russians were opposed to South Ossetia joining Georgia. 41 percent supported independence; 39 percent supported absorbing the area into Russia; and only four percent backed South Ossetia remaining an autonomous republic of Georgia. On measures Russia should take following the conflict, 33 percent supported diplomatic efforts only; 27 percent were for military action against Georgia.

#### Focus on Completing Agreement, Securing Region

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¶5. (U) In a meeting with Armed Forces servicemen who had participated in the conflict, Medvedev stressed that Russia's current goal was to obtain a "definitive ceasefire" by Georgia and the withdrawal of Georgian troops to "their permanent positions." He added that because the situation in South Ossetia remained "very difficult," Russia was "obliged to keep our peacekeepers in a state of constant preparedness." This, he said, would deter the Georgian side and allow Russia to deal with the humanitarian situation.

¶6. (U) On August 14, MFA spokesman Alexander Nesterenko said that the GOR welcomed President Bush's expression of support for the six-point plan but warned that the U.S. "should refrain from any steps that might, directly or indirectly, be perceived by the current Georgian leadership as the

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encouragement" for further attacks on South Ossetia or elsewhere.

¶7. (U) In his daily press briefing August 15, General Staff Deputy Head Nogovitsyn said that while Russia was planning to withdraw its troops, he could not give an exact date yet. He noted that several peacekeepers had been wounded since August 13 because of "actions of subversive groups" and the clearance of mines left behind by Georgian forces. He insisted that the Russian military was observing the relevant principles of the six-point agreement, not resorting to the use of force, and had stopped hostilities altogether. Furthermore, he said that the military was organizing free access for humanitarian aid and that he was meeting with the International Committee of the Red Cross later on August 15 to discuss this principle. On whether Russian armed forces had returned to their positions prior to the conflict, he said that "this has been done," but noted that Russian peacekeepers were taking "additional security measures" until international mechanisms could be set up for peacekeeping. He denied that Russia had used cluster munitions during the conflict.

#### MOD Questions U.S. Aid

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¶8. (U) On August 14, Nogovitsyn had questioned the U.S. transport of humanitarian aid to Georgia, asking whether more than just humanitarian aid was being sent, and suggesting that the U.S. should allow members of the media to see exactly what it was delivering to Georgia. On August 15, he reiterated that the Russian military had no information on whether the U.S. transport aircraft were carrying humanitarian or military cargo. Nogovitsyn's comments came after our demarche on August 15 (as well as prior demarches) to both the MFA and MOD informing them of our intent to provide humanitarian assistance on an on-going basis. At the time, neither the MFA nor the MOD had any substantive response.

#### Kokoity Blames the West

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¶9. (U) Following the meeting with Medvedev August 14, Kokoity and Bagapsh thanked Russia for its intervention. Kokoity accused Europe and the U.S. of being complicit with Georgia.

Claiming that he had long warned about the "aggression being prepared" against the two regions, Kokoity complained that neither the EU nor the OSCE had listened. He went on that what had happened "showed that Georgia had not acted alone. And today many European countries, primarily, of course, the United States, are also responsible for the genocide of the small Ossetian people."

MFA, Duma Criticize Missile Defense Deal

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¶10. (U) The MFA criticized the U.S. - Polish missile defense signing, saying the "haste" with which the deal was signed indicated that the system was targeted against Russia, not Iran. Nogovitsyn said Poland, by allowing the U.S. to place missile defense elements on its territory, was "exposing itself to a strike - 100 percent," and "becoming a priority target of action." Duma International Affairs Committee Chair Konstantin Kosachev warned that the deal, more than the disagreement over Georgia, could "set off a real escalation of tensions in Russian-American relations." He acknowledged that the agreement had been in the works for a long time, but questioned the timing.

BEYRLE